WHIRRAKEE

December 1991

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3550

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Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $20; Family $25; Concession: Single $15; Family $20. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $20.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Kangaroo Flat Secondary College's Bicentennial Room which is behind the sports ovals at the Kangaroo Flat Secondary College in Olympic Parade, Kangaroo Flat. Meetings start at 7:30pm and conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month in members' homes. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearers listed above, together with the following members: A Bridley; J Cleary; W Demeo; L Leeson; R Orr; M Stone

Excursions The assembly point for excursions is outside the Ministry of Education complex in Havlin Street East, Bendigo, unless otherwise specified. Full-day excursions normally commence at 10am (usually on a Sunday); half-day excursions normally commence at 2pm and may be either on a Saturday or Sunday. Full-day or half-day excursions are usually held on the weekend following the General meeting. Campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has 2 active sub-groups:

Bird Observers Group: meets on the first Friday of the month, at 7:30pm. The venue for meetings is the Kangaroo Flat Secondary College's Bicentennial Room which is behind the sports ovals at the Kangaroo Flat Secondary College in Olympic Parade, Kangaroo Flat.
President Anne Bridley (49 3479)

Mammal Survey Group: meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 8pm in members' homes as announced in the monthly diary.
Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (39 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crescent, Kennington (43 4063)

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club.
Vol. 12, No. 11, December, 1991

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region.

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles.

Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*. Articles sent by post should be addressed to: Rodney Orr, 2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo 3550.

Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club.

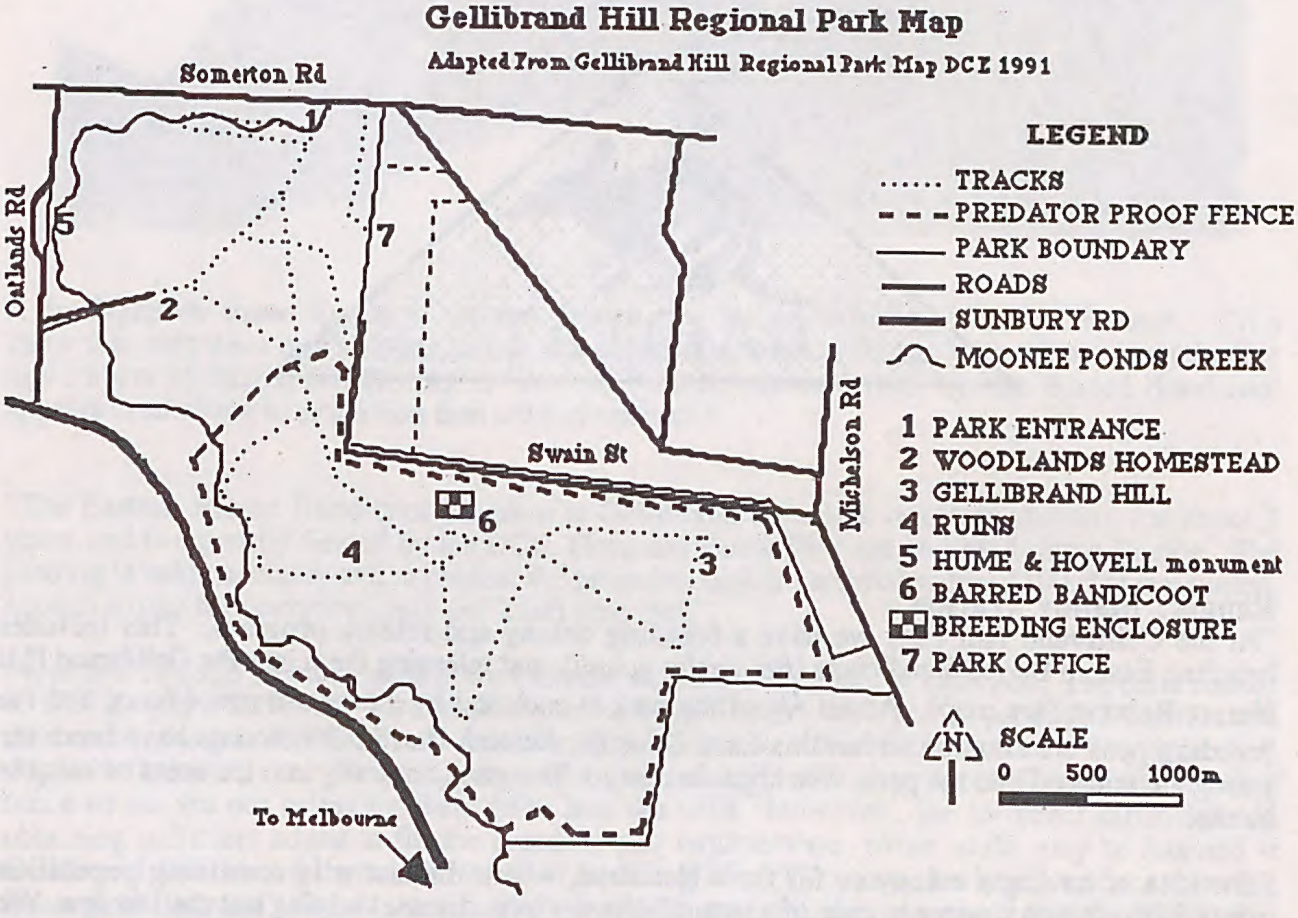
Back issues are available at a cost of 80c each. Complete sets are available at $8.00 for each volume. The above prices do not include postage.

Cover Photograph: This photograph makes a Club excursion appear to be a very worrying affair, doesn't it? Here are 4 Club members involved in navigating along the Big Hill Range during our excursion earlier in the year. This excursion was led by John Lindner, shown here down to his last finger with concern, but being helped by Joyce Hinneberg, Calum Walker and Merv Hinneberg. We were never lost, of course, as John knows this area so well, and probably has never been really lost in his long experience of bushwalking.

The Eastern Barred Bandicoot Captive Breeding Program at Gellibrand Hill Park.
Mammal Survey Group Excursion Report: August 3rd 1991.
Author: David Mc Donald.

The following report is a taped transcription (with minor modifications) of the excursion address to the Mammal Survey Group by Mandy Watson, Ranger for the Eastern Barred Bandicoot Breeding Program at Gellibrand Hill Park, and Gellibrand Hill Senior Ranger, Brian Livingstone. This report includes replies to Mammal Survey Group members' questions.

Gellibrand Hill Park management, history and location.
Brian Livingstone: Senior Ranger.
"To the west of the Greenvale valley is the remnant Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) forest. The other remnant Grey Box forest is near the Tullamarine Airport and is under threat from airport additions. These are the only clumps of Grey Box this close to Melbourne. *Eucalyptus microcarpa,* is dominant on the rises of Gellibrand Hill, and to the south and east is mainly native grasslands. The area is surrounded by farmland, encroaching urban development and the Tullamarine Airport. The park may end up being isolated from other native vegetation as there are no corridors from the nearest surrounding natural areas [a comparison we can draw with the isolation of One Tree Hill Regional Park at Bendigo]. The Moonee Ponds Creek flows through the park and is controlled by the Metropolitan Water Board. They have undertaken some revegetation and soil stabilisation works along the banks of the creek."



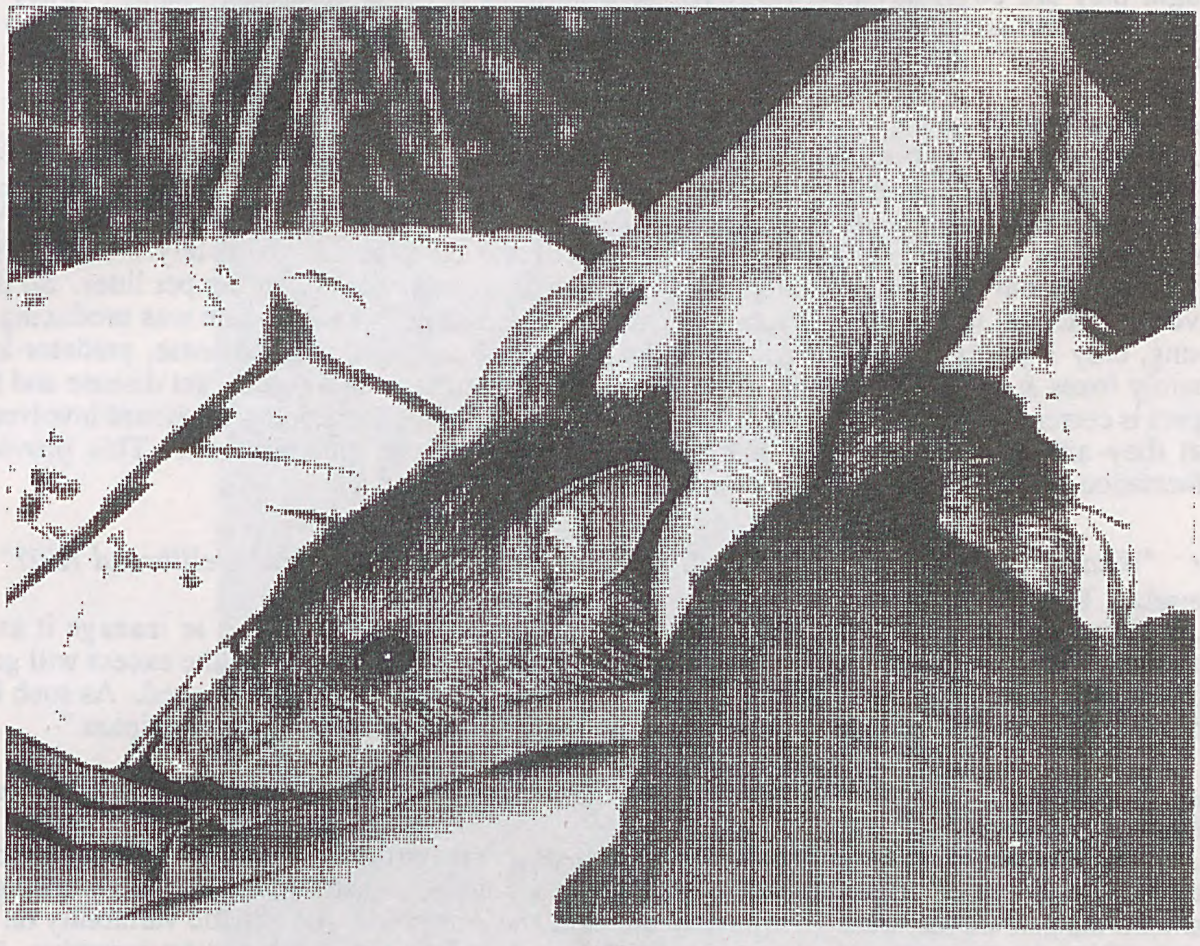
"The nature reserve was last grazed by domestic stock 6-8 years ago, and much of the revegetation has occurred in the 10 year period since the government purchased the land. The exclusion of grazing and fire management practices has allowed the natural vegetation to regenerate. The vegetation management aim is to retain a woody grasslands habitat and not allow the park to become a forest. In some areas the management practices, mainly by the use of fire, favour the native grasses. Introduced grasses are burnt every spring to reduce them so that the native grasses (including Kangaroo Grass, *Themeda triandra*) can compete successfully in those areas. Autumn season prescribed burns, held at 3 year intervals are aimed at controlling the spread of Acacias and Eucalypts. Six-yearly burns are carried out in selected areas of the grey box forest allowing some habitat variation. Overall these management practices are providing a selection of habitats within the nature reserve.

The Gellibrand Hill Park has 11 staff, including 5 rangers. The major works are largely the Eastern Barred Bandicoot Breeding Program, weed control, vermin control and fire protection. Control of foxes and cats are examples of the management of feral populations within the park. The restoration of the Woodlands Homestead, the provision and maintenance of picnic areas and walking tracks, and maintenance of the 10km nature reserve fence are also high priorities."

The Eastern Barred Bandicoot Captive Breeding Program.

Ranger: Mandy Watson.
"At the Gellibrand Hill Park we have a breeding colony and release program. This includes breeding Eastern Barred Bandicoots (*Perameles gunnii*) and releasing them into the Gellibrand Hill Nature Reserve (see map). About $^{2}/_{3}$ of the park is enclosed by a predator proof fence and the breeding pens are situated within this area. Once the Eastern Barred Bandicoots have bred, the young are released into the park. We hope that they will expand naturally into the areas of suitable habitat".

"The idea of having a colony so far from Hamilton, where the last wild remaining population exists, is to act as a reserve in case of a natural disaster (e.g. disease) wiping out the last few. We also hope to breed large numbers of young suitable for introduction into habitat within the former range of the species. Gellibrand Hill is within the former range of the species.".



A half-grown male Eastern Barred Bandicoot being held by Mandy Watson. (We knew that they were rare animals before our visit to Gellibrand Hill but, with the apparent decline in numbers of Barred Bandicoots in Western Victoria reported recently, the Barred Bandicoot appears even closer to extinction than we had realised.)

"The Eastern Barred Bandicoot program at Gellibrand Hill Park has been running for about 3 years, and is currently funded by the DCE, Flora and Fauna Division and Melbourne Region. The funding is made annually and at present the program costs are approximately $100,000 per annum, enough to pay for operating costs and 2 full time staff".

"We have 16 large breeding pens at the moment with a breeding pair in each pen. The pairs consist of wild caught individuals. The original protocol was to allow each pair to produce 2-3 litters and then return the pair to Hamilton. Initially the idea was to return them to where they were first trapped. Currently they are being returned to an area at Hamilton, protected by a predator proof fence so we are not releasing them back into the wild. However, due to recent difficulties in obtaining sufficient adults to fill the breeding pair requirements, some adults may be retained at Gellibrand Hill for the remainder of their breeding life. They may be kept here or, since the Zoological Board of Victoria has joined the breeding program, they may be sent to the Melbourne Zoo or to Healesville Sanctuary. They may be relocated from site to site to maintain genetic diversity. This aspect of the breeding program is managed by geneticists from the LaTrobe University. The Bandicoots are all blood sampled and breeding is carefully monitored to make sure that no inbreeding is occurring".

"The Bandicoots may choose the provided shelters in the breeding pens but prefer sheltering under clumps of grass or moss. We use cage traps (on a weekly basis) in the breeding pens to monitor them. This is because the Bandicoots are hard to locate due to the size of the pens. When first caught they are obviously nervous, but over time they become more 'trap happy'. They are generally placid and calm and are quiet to handle. Of course there are always exceptions to the rule."

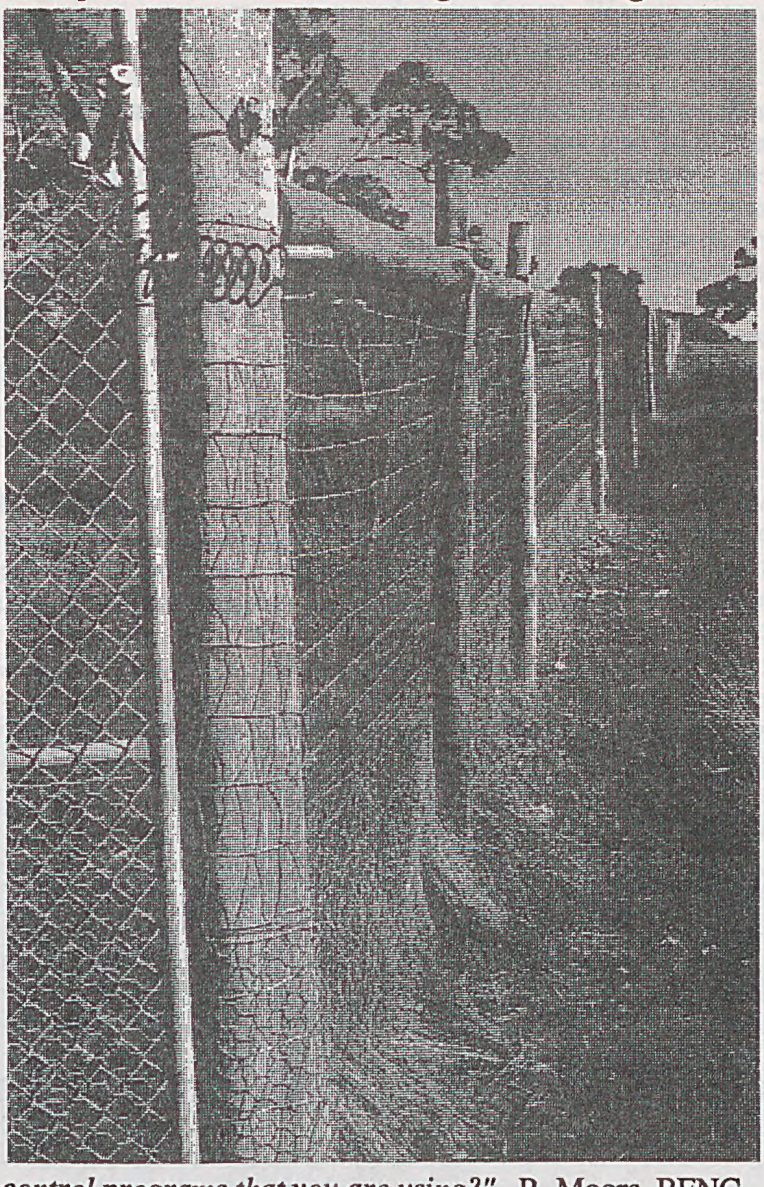
Q. *"How long is the pair kept together?"* R. Moors, BFNC.
A. "The average has been for about a year. The bandicoot breeding cycle allows them to breed all year round with a peak in late winter/early spring. The gestation period is 12.5 days after which they spend 2 months in the pouch. About 1 week is spent in the nest, but it is not known at this stage how long they remain with their mother; it is believed to be approximately 1 week. They have the potential to produce 5 litters per year, with an average of 2 offspring per litter. So they have the potential to produce 10 young per year. In Hamilton, if each female was producing 10 young, only 1 young is surviving to adulthood. So 90% die from either disease, predator-kills (mainly foxes & cats) or road kills. Toxo-plasmosis is thought to be a significant disease and this aspect is currently under investigation. One advantage of having the Zoological Board involved is that they are able to undertake many different examinations and research. This provides information that DCE has not had access to before".

Q. *"What's happening at Skipton, is it similar to what's happening at Gellibrand Hill?"* I. Fenselau, BFNC.
A. "Yes, but at the moment it is only a breeding area. The intention is to manage it as an extension of the Gellibrand Hill Park. When the Gellibrand Hill pens are full the excess will go to Skipton. Because there are no permanent full-time staff, it is not closely managed. As such it is more difficult to trap and monitor the animals. Presently there is only one pair at Skipton."

Q. *"Is there any thought of introducing the Tasmanian Barred Bandicoot into the program is there?"* I. Fenselau, BFNC.
A. "No. The results of work by geneticists suggests that they (the Tasmanian Barred Bandicoot) are so different genetically that their introduction would be a last resort. We are working to maintain the genetic material we have here on mainland Australia. The genetic variability on the mainland species is excellent, and there are presently no indications of inbreeding occurring. The whole population is estimated to be fewer than 100 individuals in the wild (Hamilton). The next annual monitoring will be carried out in November 1991 and should give an idea of the current population. We have a lot of difficulty in trapping the wild colonies and we may have to start using offspring in the breeding programs rather than releasing them into the protected area of the Gellibrand Hill Reserve."

Q. *" If you get enough animals to release, are there any areas (other than Hamilton & Skipton) that may be suitable?"* D. Mc Donald, BFNC.
A. "Yes. Part of John Seebeck's task is to investigate that possibility and we have a few possible places, but they would be between Hamilton and Gellibrand Hill. The big problem is making the area predator proof. Our fence here you probably couldn't call predator proof (I don't know if any such thing exists)(*see photo*). We are currently funding studies on our fences, using night-scope equipment with foxes, at the Keith Turnbull Research Institute. This is examining how foxes approach our fence and what improvements can be made. The boundary fence is a 10km long fence and would be very expensive to replace. We would have to be sure that the replacement was going to work. Presently we maintain what we've got and are trying to improve our feral animal control program."

Part of the predator-proof fence surrounding the holding area for bandicoots at Gellibrand Hill



Q. *"What are the control programs that you are using?"* R. Moors, BFNC.
A. "1080 bait stations, spotlight shooting, trapping and fox leg-snares."

Q. *"Do they have natural predators or are they all introduced?"*
A. "They may have been taken by owls before, but there is a problem with foxes and cats in particular. At Hamilton it is mostly cats, but around here probably more foxes than cats, and possibly some dogs."

Q. *"If you re-introduce them back into the wild, will they need to have a predator-proof fence around them?"* D. Mc Donald, BFNC.
A. "We're hoping that could occur at places like Gellibrand Hill and Hamilton where we do have fences to protect them. The ideal would be that they would breed and then disperse through the wire and re-establish from there. The wire is such that they could get out if they wanted to. The fence is not to stop Bandicoots from getting out, but to stop predators from getting in."

Q. *"So they're* (Hamilton) *not worried about cats in the enclosure!"* R. Moors, BFNC.
A. "Yes. They have a predator control program as well. The fence is electrified like ours. The Hamilton enclosure has rabbit netting, and Bandicoots up to a certain age can get out but adults can't."

Q. *"If they got out when juveniles; wouldn't they be preyed on by a cat or other predators?"* A. Bridley, BFNC.
A. "Yes, I guess that's the risk we take."

Q. *"What population do you feel that Gellibrand Hill could maintain? I suppose the habitat varies within the compound."* I Fenselau, BFNC.
A. "There has been argument about bandicoot habitat requirements. Originally it was thought that they only needed open grassland. From what I've seen here they seem to definitely prefer low shrubby cover, even though they are nocturnal. When we release them they always migrate toward the dense Hedge Wattle, *Acacia paradoxa*, away from the open grassland."

Q. *"What do they eat?"* D. Gibbons. BFNC.
A. "Just about anything, worms, grubs, dry fruit, etc. They are omnivorous and we supplement their diet with cat chow."

Q. *"Are they breeding in the nature reserve?"* A. Bridley, BFNC.
A. "Yes. We have been releasing them in the park for a couple of years and have monitored the population. We have trapped many females with young in their pouch, but we don't know what's happening to the juveniles as yet. So far we don't seem to trap those; it's the same with the wild population. More research is needed before we can say that the release is, or isn't successful."

Q. *"Do you think the juveniles are dispersing outside the park fence?"* D. Mc Donald, BFNC.
A. "Possibly. They don't have to disperse outside the park though, there is still enough space so that they can disperse within the park as well."

Q. *"Has anyone tried radio-tracking them?"* Dr. W. Holsworth, BFNC.
A. "Radio-tracking has been a real problem. It's the obvious thing to do, but the shape of their head makes it very difficult (they don't have a neck). We tried collars and they have to be put on very tight so that they don't get their feet through. If they get their feet through the collar they can choke or be more easily predated. We haven't been able to find a collar design that is suitable although they have worked on a few individuals. We tracked one female here for couple of months without any problems, but we have also had one die. So at the moment radio-tracking is not feasible until a more suitable collar is designed."

Q. *"What were the results of tracking that female?"* Friends of Gellibrand Hill Member.
A. "Basically she didn't move very much at all from where she was released. She moved approximately 50 metres from her original release point and remained around one clump of Hedge Wattle for a long time. The home range of the females is thought to be much smaller than that of the males."

Q. *"What's the estimate for the numbers surviving in the reserve?"* R. Orr, BFNC.
A. "We have released about 50 and caught approximately 1/2 by trapping. Unfortunately we haven't trapped the whole park, only a larger area around where they were released. Another problem is that not all bandicoots are trapped, some just don't want to be caught."

Q. *"What number would you guess at?"* R. Orr, BFNC.
A. "I think that a good estimate, about 50% of them. They are surviving and breeding but some have been taken by predators. One problem we might have is that people don't cooperate with the 'please don't bring dogs into the park' signs. Dogs can be a real problem because they easily find the bandicoots. We did find a couple of dead bandicoots lying on the track near where we released some. This suggests to me that dogs were the culprits although foxes and cats may also kill for pleasure."

Q. *"So people are bringing other animals into the park!"* D. Mc Donald, BFNC.
A. "They're not supposed to be and we weren't aware of it, but we have since concluded that that must have been the case."

Q. *"How difficult is it to find out where predators are getting through the fence?"*
A. "Very easy, by obvious attempts to dig under the fence. We also employ a professional shooter who uses fox terriers to search with. He uses them in areas that we know the Eastern Barred Bandicoots are not using. For example, the quarry and along the creek. The professional shooter has in the past used his dogs to find and flush out active fox dens. Our shooting, and the fence policing program have been quite successful. We have problems with the fence at this time of the year when the foxes are breeding, because the male foxes are trying to get to any females which may be inside the fence. Feral cats present a similar problem. We have to be vigilant all the time."
Q. *"Is it a problem for the Eastern Barred Bandicoots eating 1080 poison?"* A. Bridley, BFNC.
A. "We obviously try to avoid using 1080 in areas where we know the bandicoots live. The baiting program is designed to be target specific and is carried out using a bait station. The baits are buried and the soil around it is raked smooth [to help identify predator footprints]. Free feed is given for 1- 2 weeks, until some food is taken. You can monitor what's taken. We certainly don't poison until we are sure what's coming to the bait station. If it's cat or fox prints, then we'll poison."

Q. *"Do you undertake any habitat improvement, (e.g. planting Acacia paradoxa?"* J. Lindner, BFNC.
A. "Most of the area is regenerating so well naturally that we haven't needed to do to much. We've been doing some planting in the breeding pens to provide additional cover (see photo)."

Inside a breeding enclosure. This photograph shows excellent Barred Bandicoot habitat, with a dense ground cover of mostly native grasses, including dense patches of Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*)

Brian Livingstone, Senior Ranger.
A. "We are planting in erosion areas. There are also a few conflicting problems. For example, if we keep planting *Acacia paradoxa* and allow it to spread it may suit the bandicoots, but the rabbits also love it."

Q. *"How often do you spotlight shoot for predator control?"*
A. "At this time of the year probably every couple of weeks, with much of the fence being patrolled on foot."

Q. *"What other mammals live at Gellibrand Hill Park?"* R. Moors, BFNC.
A. "Ringtail and Brushtail possums, Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Swamp Wallaby and Echidnas. Koalas have also been seen in the area. I think there may be problems in the future for the 250 hectare reserve as an enclosed area. Four to five years ago there were only 22 kangaroos and the population is presently about 200. The projected figures for 2-3 years will present a major management problem unless addressed early."

The Mammal Survey Group would like to thank Mandy and Brian for their informative tour and responses to the members' questions about the management of the Gellibrand Hill Park and the Eastern Barred Bandicoot Breeding Program.

Further Reading:
Hyett, J. & Shaw, N. (1980) *Australian Mammals: A Field Guide for New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria & Tasmania,* Melbourne: Nelson. 63-64.

Strachan, R. (ed.) (1983) *The Australian Museum Complete Book of Australian Mammals,* Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 91-100.

Wallaby Grasses - some additions and corrections
Author: R. Orr

Since I wrote last month's article I have contacted Neville Walsh, a Botanist at the Herbarium, who is currently preparing the section on Grasses for the *Flora of Victoria* which is expected to be published within the next couple of years. Neville has allowed me to use his 'Key to the Grasses of Victoria', which is in draft form and hasn't been published yet. This has enabled me to check my earlier identifications of the Wallaby Grasses which I have found locally and to correct some mis-identifications - also, yet another Wallaby Grass has been named and added to the list of Victorian Wallaby Grasses, so I can bring you right up to date. The more complete list now reads:

Victorian Wallaby Grasses

Danthonia alpicola	Crag Wallaby Grass
Danthonia auriculata	Lobed Wallaby Grass
Danthonia caespitosa	Common Wallaby Grass (White-top)
Danthonia carphoides var. *angustior*	Short Wallaby Grass
Danthonia carphoides var. *carphoides*	Short Wallaby Grass
Danthonia decumbens	Tiny? Wallaby Grass
Danthonia duttoniana	Brown-backed Wallaby Grass
Danthonia eriantha	Hill Wallaby Grass (Woolly WG)
Danthonia geniculata	Kneed Wallaby Grass
Danthonia induta	Clothed Wallaby Grass
Danthonia laevis	Smooth Wallaby Grass
Danthonia lepidopoda	Wallaby Grass (Walsh, 1991)
Danthonia linkii var. *fulva*	Link's Wallaby Grass
Danthonia linkii var. *linkii*	Link's Wallaby Grass
Danthonia longifolia	Long-leaf Wallaby Grass
Danthonia monticola	Wallaby Grass
Danthonia nivicola	Snow Wallaby Grass

Danthonia nudiflora	Alpine Wallaby Grass
Danthonia pallida	Red-anther Wallaby Grass (Silver-top WG)
Danthonia penicillata	Slender Wallaby Grass
Danthonia pilosa var. *paleacea*	Purple-awned Wallaby Grass (Velvet WG)
Danthonia pilosa var. *pilosa*	Purple-awned Wallaby Grass (Velvet WG)
Danthonia procera	Tall Wallaby Grass
Danthonia racemosa	Wallaby Grass
Danthonia richardsonii	Richardson's Wallaby Grass
Danthonia semiannularis	Tasmanian Wallaby Grass
Danthonia setacea var. *setacea*	Bristly Wallaby Grass (Small-flowered WG)
Danthonia setacea var. *breviseta*	Bristly Wallaby Grass (Small-flowered WG)
Danthonia tenuior	Slender? Wallaby Grass

Using Neville's Key, I found that I had mis-identified several specimens of a Wallaby Grass which seems to be quite variable (and certainly fooled me!). I now know that they were all specimens of *Danthonia linkii* (which I was still looking for, expecting to find it here) and not *Danthonia monticola*, *Danthonia procera*, or *Danthonia tenuior*, so the corrected list of the Wallaby Grasses I have found here so far, now should read:

Danthonia auriculata
Danthonia caespitosa
Danthonia carphoides var. *carphoides*
Danthonia duttoniana
Danthonia linkii
Danthonia pallida
Danthonia penicillata
Danthonia pilosa var. *paleacea*
Danthonia setacea var. *setacea*

To add to the list of Wallaby grasses found in the Bendigo area, Paul Foreman told me recently that he has found *Danthonia racemosa* in a Bendigo back-yard, so it grows here too although I haven't been able to find it yet in the places where I've been looking.

Another grass which I noticed (just this week) growing in the One Tree Hill Regional Park and which resembles a Wallaby Grass until you look more closely, I realised eventually was really *Pentapogon quadrifidis* (as the name suggests, each floret has what appear to be 5 awns - 4 very similar and one a bit longer - and not the single, central awn and 2 lobed lemma which Wallaby Grasses have).

Slightly further from home, I found Swamp Wallaby grass, *Amphibromus* sp. (I'll have to bother Neville again as the other Keys I've used lead me to impossible contradictions when I try to decide which species it is), growing in a swampy, roadside depression near Inglewood, close to the Flora Reserve. Again, its florets are similar to those of the genus *Danthonia* but are quite different in other respects - its lemma is only weakly divided, appearing ragged rather than split into the 2 lobes that are so obvious in *Danthonia* florets.

Both of these grasses are worth looking for - I'd be interested in knowing where they are found in our region, if you do come across them.

This looks like becoming one of those continuing stories, doesn't it? I'm still very interested - hope you are! Getting to know the grasses is a bit hard on the hay fever though!

Bird Notes and Observations for October meeting

Author: Bird Observers Group

Highlights

Spotted Quail-thrush (1) One Tree Hill 21/7/91 (2) Spring Gully Reservoir 8/9/91

Migrants Arriving

Rainbow Bee-eater (8) Calivil 1/10/91 Strathfieldsaye 3/10/91
Sacred Kingfisher Strathfieldsaye 3/10/91
White-browed Woodswallow Strathfieldsaye 3/10/91
White-winged Triller (2) Calivil 24/9/91
Shining Bronze-cuckoo (1) Junortoun 16/9/91 (2) Sedgwick 7-8/9/91

Migrants Departing (last records)

White-naped Honeyeater (15) Junortoun 26/9/91
Pied Currawong Strathdale 23/9/91
Flame Robin Calivil 1/9/91

Breeding

Fan-tailed Cuckoo (mating) Strathfieldsaye 1/10/91
White-throated Treecreeper (eggs in artificial nest box) Spring Gully Reservoir 8/9/91
Grey Currawong (on nest) Junortoun 17/9/91
Magpie (on nest) Junortoun 24/9/91
Red Wattlebird (feeding young out of nest) Junortoun 21/9/91
Masked Lapwing (on eggs) Epsom 24/9/91

Observations

Grey Fantail (1) Epsom 16/9/91
White-naped Honeyeater (2) Junortoun 16/9/91
Chestnut-rumped Hylacola (1) Wellsford Forest 7/9/91

Lists

Calivil September 91
Sedgwick 8/8/91
Wellsford Forest 7/9/91

Notes

Bendigo is close to the northern and western limits of the range of the Spotted Quail-thrush, which favours open woodland, especially in the sub-alpine areas in the east of the state. Typically when flushed they run or walk away rather than fly off, so it is usually possible to gain a reasonable view of them.

A pair of Fan-tailed Cuckoos was observed near White-browed Scrubwrens and Superb Fairy-wrens. The male cuckoo called repeatedly for several minutes with a descending song. The female was attracted to the Yellow Box the male was in and landed 3m above him. She had been silent and the observer had not been aware of her presence. The male flew up to meet her and copulation immediately took place. The male sings almost at this time (1/10/91) and was easy to locate. The female remained silent, but the Scrub-wrens gave her away when she ventured close to their thicket. In the colder weather both male and female give a reply call but the song is different and neither is easy to locate.

At Epsom a pair of Masked Lapwings previously seen mating several weeks ago were observed to mate three times in about half an hour on the morning of 17/9/91. After being absent for two days, one bird was seen sitting (on eggs) and at 24/9/91 had been sitting for five days. A pair of White-naped Honeyeaters were seen feeding on nectar from Urn Heath at Junortoun. This is usual behaviour of Fuscous Honeyeaters at this time of year (mid-September) but not of White-naped Honeyeaters which are usually seen in the canopies of eucalypts.

Diary

Meetings

Wednesday, December 11, Christmas social evening. This evening will commence at 6:30pm at the same venue as our meeting place for our monthly General Meetings, the Kangaroo Flat Secondary College Bicentennial Room, Olympic Parade, Kangaroo Flat.

As usual, members bring everything they will need to be self-sufficient for their own evening meal although we arrange the food so that it may be shared. If we also bring all of the cutlery and crockery we each require then we can take everything away again and minimise the cleaning up required after the meal. Coffee and tea will be available as usual.

We will have a slide projector available so if you have any slides which you haven't been able to show other club members yet (perhaps of Club outings or camps or of interesting observations), you might like to organise them and bring them along to show us on this occasion.

The Committee has discussed other possibilities for the evening, which sound interesting and different from past activities, however, if you have some article of interest or some item which you would like to present to the other members, then please feel free to approach any member of the Committee with your ideas - participation by interested members in the activities of the evening has provided memorable experiences for us all during past gatherings - any contributions are always well-received.

Bird Observers Group

There will be no meeting during January.
The next meeting of the Bird Group will be held at the usual venue (the Kangaroo Flat Secondary College Bicentennial Room, Olympic Parade, Kangaroo Flat) at 7:30pm on Friday February 7, 1992. The speaker and topic for discussion will be decided before then.

Mammal Survey Group

No meeting has been planned for December. Please contact either the Chairman (John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (39 5710)) or the Secretary (Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crescent, Kennington (43 4063)) for information about the next meeting.

Committee meeting

Wednesday December 11. A short Committee meeting will be held after the Christmas social evening to deal with any business that needs attention before next year.

Excursions

December: Sunday, December 15. Tang Tang excursion (Win Demeo reports that it is wet enough there as water has been released into the swamp). Details of this excursion will be finalised at the Christmas social evening.
December: Visit to the Ipsens' home at Lyal Glen. Details of this visit will be finalised at the Christmas social evening.
January: Alpine Camp with the Nature Photography Group (for those who have already booked).

Supper

The usual arrangements for supper are as follows: members either bring a plate or pay $1 for supper. This small amount is used by the Treasurer to reimburse members who purchase essential supper supplies.